

ALMOST EVERYTHING WE BUY THESE DAYS COMES IN SOME SORT OF PACKAGING. WE'RE SO USED TO IT THAT IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE A SOFT DRINK WITHOUT A BOTTLE OR A CAN, A PIECE OF GUM WITHOUT A WRAPPER OR A BREAKFAST CEREAL WITHOUT A BOX.

PACKAGES ARE OBJECTS OR MATERIALS USED TO PROTECT, CONTAIN OR TRANSPORT A COMMODITY OR PRODUCT. PACKAGING CAN ALSO BE SOMETHING THAT IS PHYSICALLY ATTACHED TO THE PRODUCT OR ITS CONTAINER FOR THE PURPOSE OF MARKETING OR COMMUNICATING INFORMATION.

PACKAGING COMES IN MANY SIZES, SHAPES AND KINDS: WOOD PALLETS, GLASS BOTTLES, CORRUGATED CARDBOARD BOXES, PLASTIC BAGS, PLASTIC FOAM MEAT TRAYS, METAL JAR LIDS, PAPER LABELS AND WIRE TWIST TIES.



YOU
CAN MAKE
A

difference



Surveys show that
between 1988 and 1990
there was a 14% reduction
in packaging waste.

GET IN THE LOOP!

Do you know what these symbols mean? Match the letter with the definition.



1. The package is recyclable (where facilities exist)
2. The package is made of 100% recycled materials.
3. The package contains 30% recycled material.
4. The package contains 50% recycled material from industrial, commercial and institutional sources and at least 10% from residential sources.

We can all play a part in reducing packaging waste. As a good environmental citizen, you can start by practising the 4Rs - *reduce, reuse, recycle and recover* at home, work, school and especially at the shopping centre.

- When you shop, look for products with as little packaging as possible. It's best if the packaging you choose can be reused or recycled.
- Go for unpackaged bulk goods and products in refillable containers. These are often less expensive than the packaged goods and comparable in quality.
- Buy products in the large size "economy" or "family" size rather than the single-use size.
- Bring your own shopping bag to the store, and your own cutlery, dishes and cups to work.
- Educate yourself, your family and friends about packaging: find out what can be reduced, reused or recycled in your neighbourhood.
- If you think something is over-packaged, tell the store manager or complain to the manufacturer. They really do listen to consumers.

Be an environmental citizen — shop wisely.

To find more about the Environmental Citizenship Program, write to:
Environment Canada
Inquiry Centre
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0H3



CAI
EP
-2064



WASTE
MANAGEMENT
INFORMATION
SERIES

PACKAGING

Government
Publications

ALL
DRESSED UP
WITH

no place
to go



Environment
Canada

Environnement
Canada



Environmental
Citizenship

packaging

At one time, packaging was made from natural materials like bark, animal skins and gourds. These were replaced by earthenware, reed baskets, cloth sacks and wooden barrels. Today, packaging comes in countless forms and combinations of materials that would astonish our ancestors. The use of packaging has expanded enormously as a result of the many technological and social changes of this century.

The things we make now are different, and so are the ways we make them. The use of machinery has led to the mass production of goods, and most of them require some kind of packaging, especially if they're going to be shipped long distances. Innovations like the refrigerator and the microwave have inspired new forms of packaging. The development of low-cost synthetic packaging materials like plastic film has made it easier – and more tempting – to put everything under wraps.

The way we live has changed. Our society has evolved from rural to urban and from agricultural to industrial. Our ancestors lived off the land and produced almost everything they needed themselves; we are now a nation of avid shoppers.

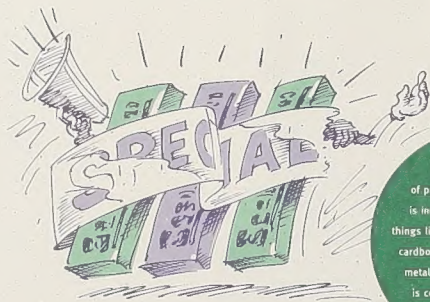
The marketplace has also changed. The old-fashioned general store that sold locally produced staples

and bulk goods has given way to the self-service supermarket, the convenience store and the department store, which offer a variety of specialized products from around the world. Our grandparents purchased flour by the 10-pound bag and did their own baking; now we buy ready-made pastries in individual serving sizes.

FACT:
Each Canadian throws away about half a kilogram of packaging per day. Half of our cities' solid waste by volume and one third of our waste by weight is made up of packaging.

To wrap or not to wrap?

THAT IS THE QUESTION



DID YOU KNOW?
An estimated 60% of packaging used (by weight) is industrial and commercial – things like wooden pallets, corrugated cardboard boxes, plastic crates and metal straps. The remaining 40% is consumer packaging – the stuff you see in your shopping cart.

Packaging has many benefits. It protects products from damage and dirt, keeps them fresh, gives us information about them and makes them easier to carry and more convenient to use.

That's the good news. The bad news is that packaging also causes problems. Most consumer product packaging is designed to be used only once – until the product has been opened or consumed – and then the package is thrown away.

Packaging is inexpensive compared to the product, but it isn't free. The cost of manufacturing it is added to the cost of everything we buy.

That's why bulk (unpacked) foods are cheaper. And getting rid of used packaging also has its price. When we throw away boxes, bottles and cans, we waste the resources that were used to make them, run up the cost disposing them and harm the environment.

At every stage in the cycle of making and disposing of packaging, there are processes that may harm our air, water and land.

The Silent Sales Pitch

With the increase in our standard of living, our habits have changed and we have demanded more and more from packaging. Nowadays, it has to be more than just a protective barrier: we also expect our packaging to be convenient, informative, hygienic and safe. Most of all, we expect it to be attractive.

Manufacturers and advertisers go to great lengths to get the "right" package; one that will entice us to buy their product. Presentation is often the only real difference between two products, but people will pay more for an appealing "image". This has led to an explosion in excess packaging and a lot of unnecessary waste.

throw away



There are seven main packaging materials: paper, plastic, wood, glass, assorted metals, aluminum and composite materials (like the aseptic packs or "drink boxes" that hold juices).

Which do you think is a bigger disposal problem – paper or plastic packaging? If you're like most Canadians, you probably said plastic, which is not yet widely recycled in Canada. Actually, it's paper, but people notice plastic packaging more, especially when they see it spilling out of garbage bins or floating in the water.

Over the past few years, both industries and individuals have tried to reduce our packaging waste. Companies have been redesigning their packaging to make it more reusable and recyclable, and more and more packages and products are being made of recycled materials.

Take a look around at your grocery store. You'll see concentrated laundry soap that gives you the same cleaning power in a smaller package, plastic refill pouches for mouthwash and fabric softener, toothpaste tubes that stand alone without the extra outer box and spices you scoop out of a bin instead of buying them in a bag.

Packages have become thinner and lighter. Since 1986, the average weight of soft drink cans has been reduced by 33% and the weight of plastic bottles by 14%. Since 1981, glass bottles have been lightened by an average of 10%.

This is very encouraging, but we still have a lot of work to do. Take another stroll around the supermarket. A lot of that wasteful packaging is going into your home – and more important, it's going into our landfills.

DID YOU KNOW?
Three-quarters of Canadians say plastic is the packaging material most responsible for the waste problem in Canada, yet plastic represents only one quarter of the packaging (by weight) that is sent for disposal.

Packaging made from paper and cardboard accounts for one third (by weight) of the packaging we throw away. Plastics account for almost 25%, wood 16%, glass 15%, metal 7%, composite materials 3% and aluminum 1%.

